

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 OMB-01 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 /075 W
-----012570 201524Z /44

R 201420Z JUN 77
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9103
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JERUSALEM 898

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, JO
SUBJECT: WHAT DO THE WEST BANKERS WANT?

1. BEGIN'S ELECTORAL VICTORY, TOGETHER WITH HARD-
LINE STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS ON THE WEST BANK,
HAVE SPARKED NUMEROUS PRONOUNCEMENTS BY ISRAELIS,
ARABS, PLO AND WESTERN LEADERS ON THE FUTURE OF
THE TERRITORY. THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO ANSWER
A QUESTION THAT IS (ALMOST) NEVER ASKED--WHAT DO
THE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES WANT?

2. BASED ON DIRECT CONTACTS WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM
OF WEST BANKERS, WE VENTURE THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS:
(A) AN END TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION. THIS SENTIMENT
IS STRONG AND WELL-NIGH UNIVERSAL. EVEN ISRAELIS
(WHO SOMETIMES ENGAGE IN WISHFUL THINKING ABOUT
WEST BANK ATTITUDES) ACKNOWLEDGE THIS; (B) SELF-
DETERMINATION. IF COMPLETELY FREE ELECTIONS
COULD BE HELD IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THEY WOULD MOST
LIKELY RESULT IN AN INDEPENDENT WEST BANK/GAZA
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STATE WITH YASSER ARAFAT AT ITS HEAD AND A FATAH-
DOMINATED GOVERNMENT. NATIONALISTIC WEST BANK
MAYORS WHO SUPPORT THE PLO (SHAKA' OF HABLUS,
QAWASIMA OF HEBRON, HANNUM OF TULKARM AND
KHALAF OF RAMALLAH) WOULD HAVE SUPPORTING ROLES.
"COLLABORATORS" WITH EITHER ISRAEL OR JORDAN
WOULD BE SWEEPED ASIDE. (FREIJ OF BETHLEHEM);

ANWAR KHATIB AND ANWAR NUSEIBEH OF EAST JERUSALEM);
(C) LINKS WITH ARAB STATES. AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A FULLY INDEPENDENT, SOVEREIGN PALESTINE,
WEST BANKERS ASSUME THAT THEIR NEW STATE WOULD
DECIDE TO ESTABLISH ECONOMIC AND PERHAPS POLITICAL
TIES WITH JORDAN AND POSSIBLY SYRIA. HOWEVER,
THE SEQUENCE IS IMPORTANT -- FIRST SOVEREIGN
INDEPENDENCE FOLLOWED BY NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER
ARAB STATES ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF TIES;
(D) AS PART OF THE FOREGOING, WEST BANKERS WOULD
BE WILLING TO RECOGNIZE THE LEGITIMACY OF ISRAEL
WITHIN SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BOUNDARIES WHICH WOULD
APPROXIMATE THE 1967 ARMISTICE LINES. WE BELIEVE
WEST BANKERS WOULD ALSO BE PREPARED TO HAVE OPEN
BORDERS AND TRADE RELATIONS BUT WOULD NOT
ACCEPT THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN
THEIR MIDST.

3. THE ABOVE REPRESENTS, WE BELIEVE, THE MAIN-
STREAM OF WEST BANK POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS AND
RELATED VIEWS AT THIS TIME. THEY DO NOT TAKE INTO
ACCOUNT THE NUMBER OF POWERFUL CONSTRAINTS SUCH
AS: (A) ISRAELI REFUSAL TO COUNTENANCE AN
INDEPENDENT WEST BANK STATE -- TO SAY NOTHING OF
A PLO-DOMINATED ONE; (B) THE REAL (AS OPPOSED TO
THE PUBLIC) POSITIONS OF SADAT, ASSAD, HUSSEIN
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AND THE SAUDI; (C) THE EXTENT OF U.S. LEVERAGE IN
REALIZING A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AND JUSTICE FOR
THE REFUGEES; (D) THE UNWILLINGNESS OR THE INABILITY
OF THE PLO TO ACCEPT PUBLICLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY
THE LEGITIMACY OF AN ISRAEL WITHIN 1967 BORDERS
THEREBY ABANDONING THE PLO'S FORMAL GOAL OF CANCELLING
THE UN'S 1947 PARTITION RESOLUTION.

4. WEST BANKERS COMPLAIN BITTERLY THAT THEY ARE
DENIED THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT OF DETERMINING
THEIR OWN FUTURE. THEY MAINTAIN THAT ISRAEL IS
HOLDING 700,000 WEST BANKERS AND 250,000 GAZANS AS
HOSTAGES. THEY POINT TO THE PRESENT SITUATION WHERE
ISRAEL IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE U.S. VIEW THAT
ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS ARE WILLING TO END STATE
OF BELLIGERENCY ON THE BASIS OF RESOLUTIONS 242
AND 338 AND INSTEAD MAINTAINS THAT THE ARAB
POSITION IS A DECEPTION AS EVIDENCE THAT ISRAEL
WISHES TO RETAIN AS MUCH OF THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES AS POSSIBLE. ONE WEST BANK LEADER
NOTES THAT WEST BANKERS ARE PREPARED (A) TO LIVE
WITH ISRAELIS SIDE BY SIDE IN ONE SECULAR DEMOCRATIC

STATE; (B) LIVE SIDE BY SIDE IN TWO STATES, ONE JEWISH AND ONE ARAB. ISRAELI, BY REFUSING TO CONSIDER EITHER ALTERNATIVE, IS SEEN AS, BASICALLY, EXPANSIONIST AND ISRAELI STATEMENTS CONCERNING PEACE ARE VIEWED IN WEST BANKERS' EYES AS A DECEPTION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JERUSALEM 898

5. WHILE GIVING FORMAL SUPPORT TO THE PLO AND TO ARAFAT PERSONALLY, WEST BANKERS HAVE NOT GRAPPLED WITH THE PROBLEM OF WHAT BECOMES OF THE 2,500,00 PALESTINIANS NOW LIVING OUTSIDE OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. WEST BANKERS DO NOT ENVISAGE THAT A MAJORITY OR EVEN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER WOULD RESETTLE IN AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINE. RATHER, THEY RATIONALIZE THAT PALESTINIANS NEED A STATE FOR PURPOSES OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND, ONCE PROVIDED WITH PALESTINIAN NATIONALITY, THOSE LIVING OUTSIDE THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WOULD TEND TO STAY WHERE THEY ARE. TYPICALLY, WEST BANKERS DO NOT WISH TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS THAT THE REJECTIONISTS WOULD CAUSE IN AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINE. THEY FALL BACK ON THE FACILE PROPOSITION THAT ALL PROBLEMS CAN BE WORKED OUT ONCE ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION ENDS.

6. ALTHOUGH THE ABOVE, WE BELIEVE, REPRESENTS WEST BANK ASPIRATIONS, WEST BANKERS WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT A LINK WITH THE EAST BANK WITHOUT FIRST ATTAINING INDEPENDENCE IF THIS WERE THE ONLY WAY

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TO ACHIEVE THE OVERRIDING GOAL OF ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL. THE HASHEMITE REGIME DID NOT WIN MANY FRIENDS AMONG WEST BANK PALESTINIANS BY ITS ADMINISTRATION ON THIS SIDE OF THE JORDAN FROM 1948-1967. HOWEVER, WEST BANKERS BELIEVE THAT HUSSEIN WOULD NOT SEEK TO TURN THE CLOCK BACK TO THE PRE '67 SITUATION AND WOULD, IN FACT, GRANT A MEASURE OF AUTONOMY DESPITE THE OBVIOUS DANGERS OF STIRRING UP POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS ON THE PART OF PALESTINIANS LIVING ON THE WEST BANK.

7. THE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTY WITH THIS LAST-MENTIONED OPTION, IS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PLO. ANY PALESTINIAN HOMELAND WHICH IS CREATED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PLO AND THE TWO AND A HALF MILLION PALESTINIANS LIVING OUTSIDE THE WEST BANK AND GAZA (ADMITTEDLY AN UNLIKELY DEVELOPMENT) WOULD CAUSE IRRIDENTIST PROBLEMS SOONER OR LATER. AS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS FOR ALL CONCERNED, THE PALESTINIANS ARE THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM AND THEIR DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL SELF-EXPRESSION AND A NATIONAL HOMELAND WILL NOT FADE AWAY REGARDLESS OF WHAT IS DONE ABOUT THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION 242.

8. PHASED IMPLEMENTATION. THEORETICALLY, THIS HAS CERTAIN ATTRACTIONS. IF AN OVERALL AGREEMENT COULD BE WORKED WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, GUARANTEED DEMILITARIZATION, AND AN INTERIM INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION LEADING UP TO SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN A SPECIFIED TIME FRAME, THIS MIGHT BE AN IDEAL OUTCOME. AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT WOULD GIVE THE WEST BANKERS TIME TO

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ORGANIZE THEMSELVES POLITICALLY, SOMETHING THAT THEY CANNOT EFFECTIVELY DO UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION. EVEN IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE WEST BANKERS WOULD BE NO MATCH FOR THE LIKES OF ARAFAT AND, WHATEVER THE DRAWBACKS OF THE LATTER, SOME FORCE WILL HAVE TO BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE REJECTIONISTS WHO WILL DO THEIR UTMOST TO SABOTAGE ANY SETTLEMENT ALONG THE LINES OF RESOLUTION 242 AND 338.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WEST BANK, PALESTINIANS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JERUSA00898
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770219-0747
Format: TEL
From: JERUSALEM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770640/aaaabjcs.tel
Line Count: 224
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b381e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2098277
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHAT DO THE WEST BANKERS WANT?
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, IS, JO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b381e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009